

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As low-income households across the country deal with the economic impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, we ask that you provide assistance to address the issue of water affordability in any future relief package. Access to clean drinking water and safe wastewater systems during this pandemic is a concern for communities in every Congressional district and as such should not be a partisan issue. We urge you to advance bipartisan policies to ensure every American has access to clean, safe drinking water and wastewater services.

The spread of COVID-19 has led to rising unemployment in communities across the country. Though Congress has provided relief through passage of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201) and again through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (H.R. 748), we must address the remaining hardships facing the newly unemployed and help ensure continued access to vital water and wastewater services.

Access to sanitation is vital to helping stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep communities safe. Throughout the country, water and wastewater utilities are working hard to ensure access to water and wastewater services, even for households unable to pay. When consumers are unable to pay their water bills, utilities are forced to cover the costs locally which will ultimately mean they may be pressured to raise rates for everyone or be unable to make needed upgrades to ensure uninterrupted delivery of water throughout their service areas. Federal emergency water customer assistance funding would help local utilities maintain critical infrastructure networks without cost-burdening low- or no-income customers who cannot afford to pay their bills. Prior to the crisis, some utilities across the country had already begun operating similar programs for local low-income rate payers. However, additional federal resources are needed to serve the rising number of vulnerable households.

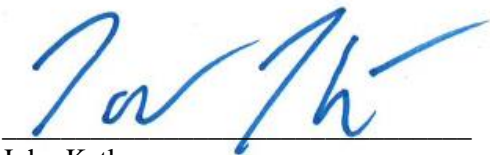
Similar to assistance provided in the bipartisan-led Low-Income Water Customer Assistance Program Act (H.R. 4832), emergency grant funds could be designated for the purposes of assisting households facing a hardship with paying their water utility costs and making utilities whole for providing services even for those who cannot pay during this pandemic. States could also use the funds to support similar existing

programs during the crisis. Additionally, states could implement other hardship provisions, including direct financial assistance, water shut-off moratoriums, and water efficiency assistance to support emergency installations or leak repair.

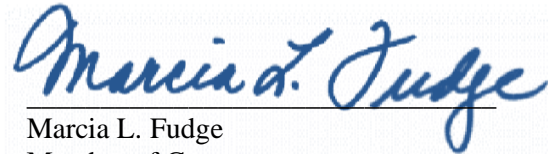
We are living in increasingly uncertain times. The spread of COVID-19 is continuing to have a devastating impact on the financial well-being of municipalities, businesses and millions of Americans nationwide. We must do all we can to assist households in paying their water bills and support water and wastewater utilities during the ongoing public health emergency.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



John Katko  
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge  
Member of Congress

## Signatories

Ted Deutch  
Deb Haaland  
Brenda Lawrence  
Anthony Brindisi  
Brian Fitzpatrick  
Anthony G. Brown  
Tim Ryan  
GK Butterfield  
Ann Kirkpatrick  
Alcee L. Hastings  
Jesús G. “Chuy” García  
Bobby L. Rush  
Steve Cohen  
Joyce Beatty  
Gwen Moore  
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Xochitl Torres Small  
A. Donald McEachin  
Emanuel Cleaver  
Diana DeGette  
Barbara Lee  
Rosa DeLauro  
André Carson  
Bennie Thompson  
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